

COMIC CUTS

AND LARKS

2

[No. 2,754.]

SAMMY AND THE SHRIMP GIVE THE MATES THE AIR!

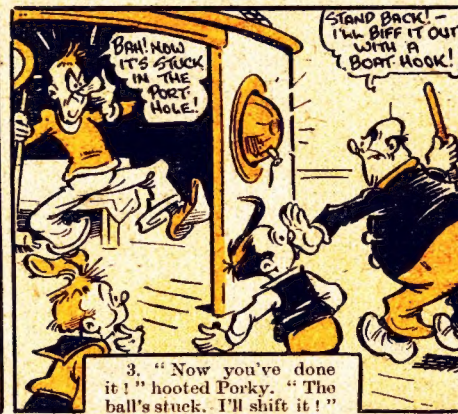
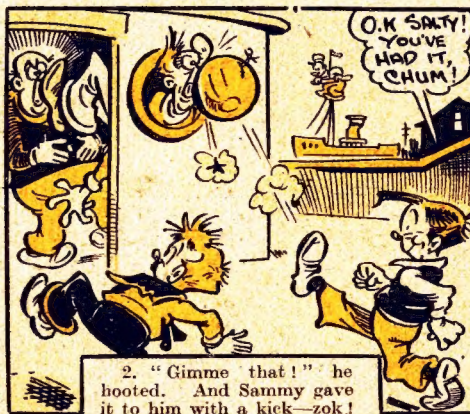
[NOVEMBER 18, 1944.]



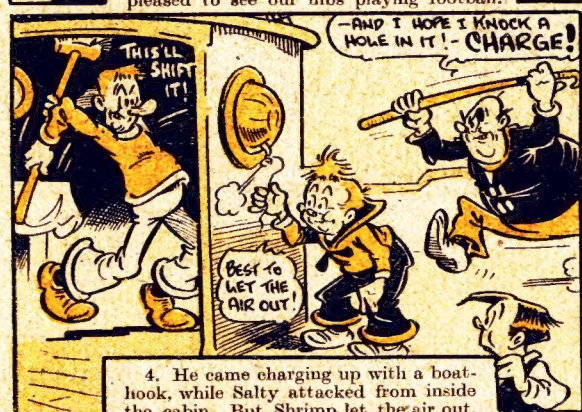
1. Salty had a letter saying his uncle was coming to lunch. So he wasn't at all pleased to see our nibs playing football.



2. "Gimme that!" he hooted. And Sammy gave it to him with a kick-zok!



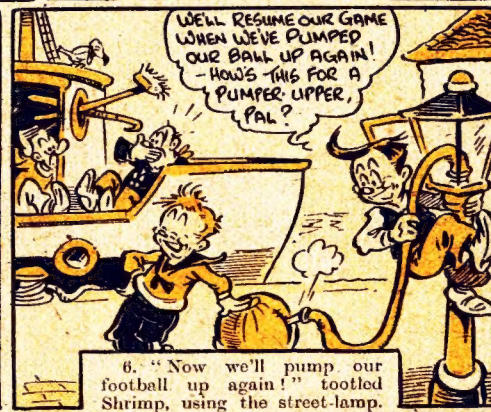
3. "Now you've done it!" hooted Porky. "The ball's stuck. I'll shift it!"



4. He came charging up with a boat-hook, while Salty attacked from inside the cabin. But Shrimp let the air out.



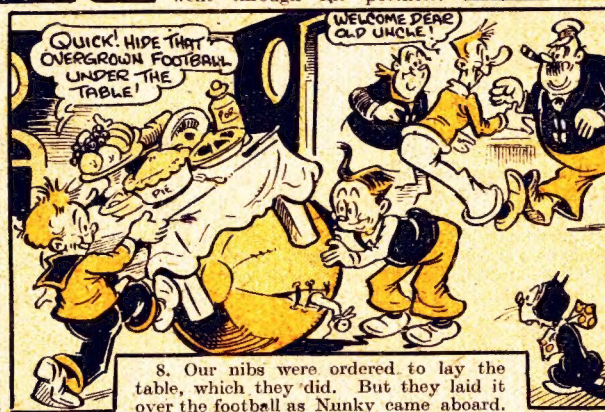
5. So the football dropped out. Boat-hook-and broom went through the porthole.



6. "Now we'll pump our football up again!" tootled Shrimp, using the street-lamp.



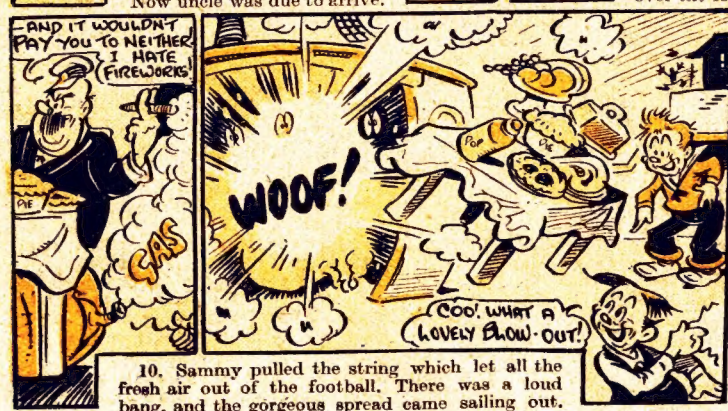
7. In a very few ticks the football was an outside. Now uncle was due to arrive.



8. Our nibs were ordered to lay the table, which they did. But they laid it over the football as Nunky came aboard.



9. The mates steered him to where the spread was waiting.



10. Sammy pulled the string which let all the fresh air out of the football. There was a loud bang, and the gorgeous spread came sailing out.



11. Of course, Nunky had a few terse words to say about this. Mps!



12. And while he was saying it, our cherubs had a feed!

Three Merchant Navy chums have a startling adventure.

CHUMS ADrift!

Shipmates Ashore.

WHEN Bill Sanders, able-seaman in the cargo-carrier s.s. "Bullfrog," went ashore at Cannes he was not looking for trouble. Bill never had to look for trouble, anyway; it was always waiting round the corner for him!

His bosom pal "Spider" Webb accompanied him, and it was well known that the tough little Cockney fireman would sooner have a fight with someone than duck for dinner.

The once-fashionable resort of Cannes had been in Allied hands for some time, and Bill and Spider arrived with the innocent intention of stretching their legs and sluicing the sea-salt out of their throats.

The ship's cook went with them—Pete Holben, popularly called "Dutchy"—and Captain Jones of the "Bullfrog" had smiled approval because cookie was a big, stolid fellow who might look after Bill and Spider like a benevolent uncle.

At the first café where they settled, Dutchy, who could speak French and German, got into friendly conversation with an elderly Frenchman. He transpired he was the Marquis d'Avigney, and presently he invited the shipmates to dine at his chateau near the town. The dinner was good, and the friendship ripened that evening with the help of a bottle of old Napoleon cognac which the Marquis produced from a secret hiding-place.

"Alas, m'sieu's," he said, "for a long time ze Boche pigs stayed here in the chateau."

Then he and the white-haired Marquise, his wife, related how a German colonel, named Schmoll, had stolen a small, but rare, piece of tapestry and a casket of jewels.

"But Schmoll and ze other pigs have gone back to their sties across ze Rhine," sighed the Marquis d'Avigney. "Oui, m'sieu's, once we were rich and now we are poor, but it is better to be poor—and free."

Needless to say, the stars were out and it was very late when the shipmates wended their way back through Cannes singing the "Quack, quack" song.

Neither Bill nor Spider troubled unduly about the passage of time when on shore leave, but Dutchy heaved deep sighs of regret on finding no liberty-boat to take them off to the anchored steamship.

"Don't you worry, mate," said Bill. "we'll soon hire a boat. You leave this to me and Spider. By hokey, you'll never be in real trouble so long as you stick by us."

"Cor lumme! I should say not!" chuckled Spider. "Ere's a fishing-smack just about to push off, and we'll get the French skipper to put us alongside the old Bullfrog as he goes out."

The fishing-smack was the "Merle"—blackbird—and owned by a bearded Frenchman named Bouton, whose



Bill flung a half-brick that smote the Nazi colonel full in the belt.

brother acted as crew. Bill and Spider paused by the edge of the quay, and ignoring the fact that Dutchy could speak French, stated their need in a weird jargon. However, the skipper understood and welcomed them on board, but flatly refused any payment for a small service to "ze brave sailors his vair good friends."

But he requested them to go down into the for'ard fish-hold and keep out of sight because there was a gendarme coming along the ill-lighted quay. Certain quishings and possibly a few Germans were still in hide-out in Cannes, and strict orders had been issued by the authorities that no fishing craft must take passengers in any circumstances.

"Y' see, Dutchy," grinned Spider, as they sat in the pitch-dark hold, "you're right as rain when you're wiv pals who know the ropes."

"Ya, ya," agreed Dutchy dolefully; "but we are moomch late, and I t'ink poor Cap'n Jones miss me and der leedle cup of cocoa dot—"

He broke off short, and all sat bolt upright in sudden alarm. Sounds of the moorings being cast-off were interrupted by a sharp question in French from Skipper Bouton, and it was followed by two heavy thuds. Then a voice spoke gruffly in German.

"Throw the pigs below somewhere. We are eight, and well-armed if any try to prevent our escape now. These French pigs we will drop in the deep sea on our way to San Remo after we have been to the Iles Lerin and found the Iron Rock."

Dangerous Moorings!

WHAT did it all mean? Bill and Spider sat open-mouthed in the hold, and it did not need Dutchy to warn them in a whisper to keep quiet. They felt stupefied by a turn of events that obviously spelt grave peril for them all.

When cookie interpreted what had been said in German, it was plain they must lie low banking on a chance to escape when the fishing smack called at the Iles Lerin. These were a group of small islands just off Cannes, the most famous being St. Margaret where the Man in the Iron Mask had been imprisoned in the waterfront fortress.

Within a few minutes two bundles were lowered into the dark hold and dropped upon the deck. They were the Bouton brothers, gagged and bound, and Bill loosened their gags with a warning for them to speak softly.

"You leave this to us, mates," he whispered; "trust us to see you out of trouble. We'll take the cords off your wrists and ankles when the time comes to hop ashore, but you'd better stay trussed now in case the blinkin' Jexies come to take another look at you."

It was Dutchy who quietly conversed in English with the trapped fishermen, and sometimes paused to listen to the guttural talk of the Germans—or at

least two of them who remained on deck. Most of them apparently had gone to hiding in a poky cabin aft.

The word "Oberst"—colonel—came to his ears once or twice, then suddenly he heard one of the Nazis say, "Ja, Oberst Schmoll." He interpreted in a whisper to Bill and Spider, and told them that eight Germans were on board, all Storm Troopers, who had been in some secret hide-out ever since the port had fallen into Allied hands. They intended to escape by way of the north Italian coast which, at the time, was still held by German detachments.

As the Merle had official sanction to go fishing, there was no reason to suppose the Hun pirates who had overpowered the Bouton brothers would be hindered in their carefully planned getaway. A slow chugging of the auxiliary engine announced that the boat was beating out of harbour, and then the sails were set for the run across to the islands.

Bill and Spider talked in whispers, aware that discovery meant a grim fate for them all. But as they and Dutchy were unarmed, they could only sit tensely in the darkness and await whatever chance might occur.

Presently the sails were lowered and cookie interpreted another remark made in German by Schmoll of whom the Marquis d'Avigney had spoken as a "thieving pig."

"Der pig-dogs are coming to moorings at der isle of St. Margaret," he whispered. "They come to pick up dot Iron Rock dot is spoken of. I t'ink one of her dirty Huns take off his clothes to go in der vater."

The boat moved slowly round, but apparently there was difficulty in finding the place where Schmoll wanted to moor. And after a space, it went alongside a wooden wharf, and two or three of the Germans stepped ashore.

"Stay here," Bill muttered. "I'm going to have a look-see."

He crept quietly up an iron ladder and peered out of a hatch. Three Germans were ambling along the dark, deserted wharf, one of them wearing only a grey pair of shorts. The others were aft talking together in low tones, and Bill slithered across the fore-deck to the side rail.

The Merle was moored at the bow by a single warp that could be cast off in a matter of seconds. The stern was swung out, and opposite the stern were bollards on the quay with what looked like a rusty wire mooring attached.

At this moment there was a chance to get ashore unseen. On the impulse he slithered over the side and gained the cover of a deserted shed. If he could delay the boat, distract the attention of the Huns, Spider and the rest might yet escape unharmed.

Fortune favoured, as it does so frequently in brave and desperate enterprises. Bill saw the three Germans who had come ashore standing looking out upon several mooring buoys on the dark, smooth water. The one in the shorts bore a coiled line at his belt and a German in officer's uniform was speaking authoritatively in a gruff voice. This man, he judged, was the notorious Colonel Schmoll.

The five Nazis remaining on board came from the Merle's cabin, wiping their lips, and one laid the empty wine flask on the deck. They went forward and stood in the bows as the partly-stripped German slipped into the water and swam to one of the mooring buoys which Schmoll pointed out to him.

Not far along the coast was the grim fort where the Man in the Iron Mask was imprisoned. But Bill had no thoughts of historical events however interesting; he wondered about that "Iron Rock" mentioned by the Huns, but was concerned mostly with helping his shipmates and the doomed Bouton brothers.

The houses he could see in a small village near the fort looked deserted. If he could not get help from anyone quickly, he might at least delay the Germans and keep them employed while the prisoners in the hold made their escape ashore.

With this aim, he slipped out of his clothes down to the short underpants. The Nazis were too occupied to notice, though they would have seen anyone

who tried to get out of that for'ard fish hold.

Slithering across a few yards of wooden wharf in the dim starlight, Bill reached the bollards and quietly paid out some of the rusty mooring wire. Then, holding the wire near its loose end, he swung down by one hand on a ring-bolt and lowered himself into the warm water.

An expert swimmer, he slid away under the surface and came up under the counter of the fishing smack. His next action was to reach below the water and reeve the strong wire round the rudder stem, and then he swam quietly back to the nearby wharf, holding the end of the wire.

The Germans were still occupied. The Nazi swimmer had gone down a stout mooring rope to the sea-bed. It was an admirable feat in itself, and, as it transpired, he fastened the thin line he bore to what looked only like a large piece of rock.

But meantime Bill was busy again, firmly hitching the loose end of the wire to the bollard, thus making the stern of the Merle firmly secure to the shore!

This done, he went behind the shed, grabbed his clothes and dived for better cover behind a tumble-down wall. There he dressed hastily, and awaited events, for the Nazis had now hauled the rock ashore on the end of the line and Colonel Schmoll was carrying it as the landing party came back.

Nothing was likely to happen to the French fishermen yet, and indeed the Germans, who were plainly elated, only thought of getting away to sea after their brief call at the island. The three went on board, the for'ard warp was cast off and the auxiliary engine started to get the Merle out.

But the boat's head swung round and nothing else happened. The Merle was held firmly by the stern, and it took the amazed Germans some time to realise that a wire had "got caught" round the rudder stem. Even when they realised this, it still did not occur to them that this was anything more than an accidental mishap.

There was no way of clearing the wire except by going ashore, and Schmoll moored again to the wharf both fore and aft and sent a man to the bollards. The fellow stooped down and grunted in surprise, his suspicions aroused immediately he saw how the mooring wire was fastened. But next moment he gave another grunt and dropped senseless on his face. Bill from behind the wall had flung a half-brick that caught him a crack under the ear.

Astounded by the strange happenings, Schmoll himself leaped ashore and drew a revolver. As if glad to see him, the agile Bill bounded over the low wall and flung another half-brick that smote the Nazi colonel full in the belt!

"Ach! G-gotterdammerung!" Schmoll's revolver dropped on the wharf, and Bill grabbed it and fired a shot that bowled over one of the Germans on board with a bullet through the shoulder.

"Ahoj, mates!" he bellowed. "Now's your blinkin' chance!"

Alarmed at Bill's prolonged absence, Spider and Dutchy had already taken the cords from the two French fishermen. Now they came tumbling out of the fish-hold just as three of the Germans tried to dive down there for cover. Their fists crashed against the faces and bodies of the dismayed Huns, and then they armed themselves with the enemies' guns.

But the remaining Nazis had been so taken by surprise that their hands were above their heads before Bill had time even to fire a second shot.

Within a few minutes all the Germans were disarmed and their hands tied behind their backs, and shortly afterwards the Merle sailed back to Cannes.

The strange rock was examined. It was made of iron from some old roofing, and cunningly draped with weed fastened to it. Under the weed was a galvanised padlock, and a key in Schmoll's possession was found to fit it. The "rock" could be opened, and inside, covered by waterproof fabric, was the rare piece of tapestry and the jewels of the Marquis d'Avigney!

(Your pals of the tank Jumbo will be back on this page Friday week.)

18-11-44

ILL-TIMED!



"I feel so ill. Do you know if there is a doctor on board?"

"Y-yes. I—I'm one!"

Kenton Detective Stories

MYSTERY TRAIL!

Tracks in the Frost.

THE air was crisp and keen, and there was very little warmth in the November sun, partly obscured by haze, though that was gradually disappearing.

It was a morning that made Kenton Steel's drive down to the quiet village of Brentwell a pleasant one. With little traffic on the roads, he was able to send his car purring along.

His way took him through fields and meadows whose grass was turned from green to white, for there had been a very heavy frost overnight.

Steel reached the village and knew he was near his destination. The house for which he was bound lay a mile or so beyond it, perched prominently on rising ground.

His owner, Mr. Malcolm Spencer, had planned Steel earlier to come down. He proved to be a genial, burly man, who greeted the detective cordially.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Steel," he said, as they shook hands. "Come right in and have a glass of something to warm you up before anything else. I expect you can do with it after your run down."

"It certainly is a very crisp morning," agreed Steel with a smile. "A few moments later I would be gratefully swallowing the cordial which Mr. Spencer poured out for him. Then the detective sat up, perched on a cigarette, on his client's choice cigar—and they got down to business.

"My house was broken into during the night, Mr. Steel," began Spencer. "That much I told you on the phone. Some of my wife's jewellery has been taken—things and such like. Not worth a fortune, perhaps, but it's annoying all the same to lose them."

"Quite agree," said Steel. "And it's just as important to bring the thief to book, whatever the amount or value of the loot."

"The strange thing is that there is no sign of disturbance," his client went on. "I mean, everything else in the house is quite all right. No evidence of a smashed window or a forced door, or anything like that. The jewellery has vanished—just as though it had been whisked away by magic."

"The thief may have been an expert," replied Steel, "knowing so much about the game that he would be careful not to leave any clues behind—or try not to, at any rate. But I shall make sure either way either eventually give them away."

"Well, perhaps you will be able to see something that I have missed," declared Spencer. "As soon as I discovered my loss I went all over the house. But I found nothing suspicious."

"Where all doors and windows fastened last night?" the detective inquired.

"Right, practically all," said Spencer. "The windows were locked."

"That myself, as I always do. One or two windows on the upper floors were left unlocked if used last night."

"The thief may have made use of one of them to gain an entry," said Steel. "I shall look up the outside of the house wouldn't stop him."

"No, perhaps not," agreed Spencer. "All the same, once he did get in, he would surely leave some evidence. There was a very heavy frost last night, as you know. To approach this house from any angle he would have had to walk across the grass. His boots would be wet, and he would surely leave foot-marks of some sort inside the house."

"Perhaps I may succeed where you have failed," smiled Steel.

But although the detective, accompanied by his client, went thoroughly and searchingly all over the house, he discovered no sign anywhere that might lead to a clue such as Spencer had mentioned.

True, he decided that more than one window having been undisturbed during the night, could have been easily reached from the ground. But pawlers on the floor beneath them was the slightest trace of wet boot soles having passed that way not many hours before. Not even particles of soil.

Baffled in that direction, Steel turned to another theory. Had there been no breaking in at all? Had the robbery been perpetrated by someone inside the house?

He was told, however, in reply to his questions, that the only persons in the house during the night had been Mr. Spencer and his wife. They had two maids, sisters, and had had them in their service for years. But they had been given permission to go to a family reunion in the village and to stay at home all night, returning in the morning.

"Well that washes that theory out," mused Steel. "The thief was evidently someone from outside. Not a leading expert in the game, to my mind, for he would have taken more while he was about it."

Satisfied that this was no use searching further in the house, Steel told his client that he would like to have a look round outside.

"Certainly," said Spencer. "Come this way—it will be nearest."

Each side of the big house had a deep opening in the garden, and they got down and the one through the garden and grounds. The one through the



Steel threw a long arm balance and started walking on his hands.

which the detective and his client passed opened to a stone balcony, with half a dozen steps leading down to a lawn.

It was the south side of the house, and the sun's rays, feeble though they were, had made the white frost almost completely disappear. Just traces of it remained here and there.

Steel spent some minutes searching around and studying the ground. He found nothing, and wended his way round to the east side of the house.

Here there was hardly any sun, and the frost on the grass was much more pronounced and general. It did not take Steel long to see that nobody had passed that way recently, there was not the sign of any footprint or other disturbance.

So on he went, his client by his side, interested and curious, but careful not to say anything that might disturb Steel's train of thought. They reached the end of the west side and turned the corner.

Steel saw a flat, extensive lawn, running right up to the side of the house. Facing north, it never had any sun at all, and the white frost still remained there and sparkling.

The detective's eyes roved across it to where, some twenty or so yards away, was a fence. Beyond that was a copse which stretched as far as the road.

Looking up, Steele saw a window which could be reached without much

difficulty by climbing. Signaling to his client to stand hard by, he started making his way along close to the wall, eyes bent to the ground.

"I don't want to spoil my trail by walking over it," he said to Spencer over his shoulder by way of explanation.

But there were the first feet that had walked that way, as Steel saw. The thick frost was undisturbed, till he reached a spot directly beneath the window he had noted.

And, just short of that, Steel pulled up and his eyes narrowed. His gaze slowly travelled along a line of markings in the grass that led away from the wall right across to the fence.

"I say, that looks like a trail, doesn't it?" Spencer burst out excitedly.

"It does," agreed Steel grimly. "But a trail of what? They're not footprints—nor human ones, at any rate."

He walked across to the fence, taking a course ruled by the strange trail and examining every inch of it intently. The marks of disturbance were generally of an irregular, but nothing like the imprint of a foot or boot.

Steel looked over the fence and saw an area of bushes and shrubs, with uneven ground, littered with fallen leaves. It would be useless looking for footprints there.

He made his way back over his own trail to where his client waited, his brow creased in thought.

"It certainly is the trail of something—but what?" he said to his client. "If the thief left it—well, he would have little trouble in slipping up to that window and breaking in. He could do it on his head, as the saying is."

Now, what were the marks? Not the footprints of a human being. That's what's baffling me at the moment. How, otherwise, they made—and by whom—or what?"



The Bent Penny.

FOR long moments the two men stood there in silence. Steel was thinking hard, his client showed by his expression that he could think of nothing useful to suggest.

The detective gave a sudden grunt of annoyance, then he started across to the fence, examining that strange trail a second time. But now he reached on the other side of it.

Suddenly his keen eyes noticed something lying in the white grass. He picked it up and turned it over. It was a penny, dated 1866 and worn very thin. It was slightly bent and had a hole through the middle.

But that was all he did find, and when he returned to his waiting client he showed him the coin.

"That's all I've found," said Steel. "Don't suppose for a moment—"

But he was interrupted by a startled exclamation from Spencer.

"My goodness!" exclaimed that gentleman. "How very curious! It is—it is the same, I recognise it! How on earth could it ever have got there?"

Steel stared keenly at him.

"What is there extraordinary about that penny?" he inquired.

"I don't know," Steel turned up again," laughed Spencer. "I had that in my pocket for weeks—since it was passed on to me by my father."

Kept it as a sort of curio, you know.

It's nearly eighty years old and a bit battered."

"And you lost it, I suppose?" ventured Steel.

"I don't want to give it away!" was the reply. "Yesterday afternoon, when my wife and I were down in the village. There was a chap about thirty or so playing an old, old, burly game on the street. The poor devil looked down on his luck, and he had a club-foot, and he was shivering all over. I know. So I fished out the coppers I had, that one among them, and gave him the penny."

"You're sure of that?" cried Steel quickly. "You're certain you gave him that penny?"

"Absolutely positive!" declared Spencer. "I don't know it again in a thousand."

"Then the man started walking back to the balcony. Steel caressed his chin thoughtfully, staring the while at the ancient penny reposing in the palm of his hand.

"Ah, here's my wife, Steel!" suddenly broke in Spencer. "Let me introduce you."

The introduction made, Steel answered the rapid, excited questions put to him by the lady, who was so anxious to know how he was getting on and if he had discovered anything.

"I don't know," he said, "I don't think."

Mr. Spencer," replied Steel. "I think I know who the thief is. What I'm trying to solve is the mystery of how the thief got that trail in the frosty grass mounds."

With that, he briefly explained the discovery he had made on the other side of the fence, and with a startling suddenness, the detective gave a loud whoop.

"That's it!" he cried. "Why on earth didn't I think of it before? This is how he did it!"

At the utter amazement of the Spencers, Steel suddenly threw a long arm balance and started walking on his hands like an acrobat. He went a dozen yards, then, then suddenly vaulted back on to his feet again.

"There you are!" he said triumphantly. "That solves the mystery, or I am very much mistaken."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Steel, you've only added to the mystery as far as we are concerned," said Spencer, with a little laugh.

"My suspect he explain," said Steel. "Then let us be the hardy-gurdy player—the man who stole the club foot—the man to whom you gave that bent penny with the hole in. And this is how he did it."

"He got into the copse from the road, and was safe there as regards leaving any traces of footprints, at any rate. When he got to the lawn it was another matter. He had to cross it to reach the window by which he intended to enter the house. And he would be bound to leave a tell-tale trail of footprints in the thick frost. And this was the one thing he wanted to avoid."

His particular footprints would be very easy to follow, owing to the frost, and his narrow or less lopsided walk. So my theory is that to cover his tracks he deliberately made others to follow. He started to walk on his hands. In other words, he walked across the lawn on his hands, as I did just now. Then he climbed up the wall, opened the window, and, having first removed his boots, got into the house."

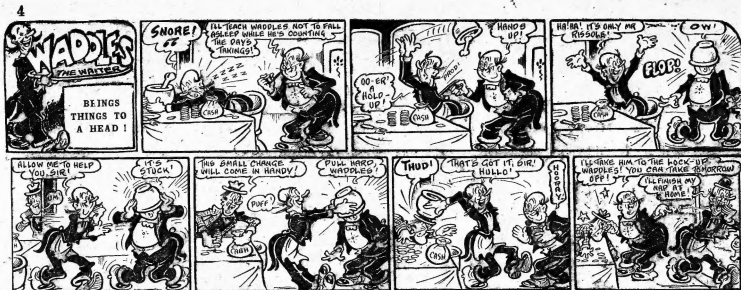
"He collected what he could find lying about the room, and he put his boots on again. Then down to the ground below, and back to the fence in the way the acrobatic manner. But on the way that bent penny fell out of his pocket, and he never noticed it, or didn't think it worth worrying about."

"Well, that's my theory, and I'm going to act on it right away."

Steel, a few unexpected and pointed questions were sufficient to make the man betray himself.

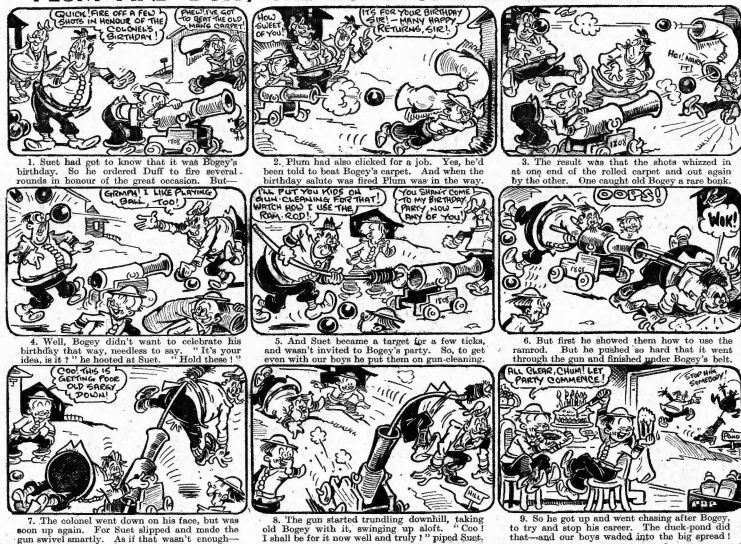
He admitted everything, and was soon safely under lock and key.

(Another baffling mystery solved by Kenton Steel next Friday evening.)



Catching the waiter napping, the boss tried to scare him and got himself in a fix. So Waddles gave him a hand, crowned a real cash-grubber, and clicked.

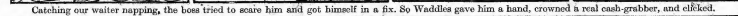
PLUM AND DUFF, THE BOYS OF THE BOLD BRIGADE!



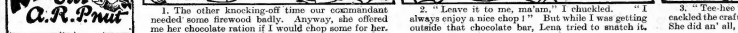
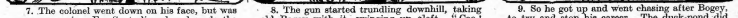
1. The other knocking-off time our commandant needed some firewood badly. Anyway, she offered me her chocolate ration if I would chop some for her.

2. "Leave it to me, ma'am," I chuckled. "I always enjoy a nice chop!" But while I was getting outside the chocolate bar, Lena tried to snatch it.

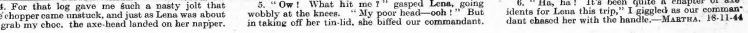
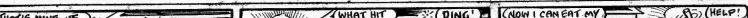
3. "Tee-hee! Watch me upset cackled the crafty busy, bowling me over. She did 'an' all, and brought trouble on.



PLUM AND DUFF, THE BOYS OF THE BOLD BRIGADE!



BIG BEN AND LITTLE LEN, THE LARKY LADS!





Kitty might have lost her cakes if the parrot had not put the wind up Freda. Then she tried to trap it and got beaten at the post. So Kitty scored again.

BIG BEN AND LITTLE LEN, THE LARKY LADS!



1. Pa was busy with bills he had to pay, so the lads chose the wrong moment to tap him for two bob. "Whistle for it!" he snapped.



2. "That's an idea!" lisped Len. "Let's try and raise a bit with my whistle." So they started the lark by calling on hefty Jim Jab.



3. But when the heavyweight champ opened the door he handed out a hefty sock with his right which caught Ben and sent him staggering.



4. Right across the path he went in reverse, and finished up by toppling over. Now the road had been fondly tarred, so Ben's flippers stuck.



5. "Haw, haw!" guffawed Jim Jab with glee. Ben did not see the funny side of it, needless to say, and Len gave him a bang.



6. But a wood block was by now firmly stuck to Ben's hands. So when he shot forward over Len's thatch, those blocks biffed the big brute.



7. It cut his mirth off at the meter, and he got stuck down in a hurry with all the bread knocked out of him. "We'd better scurry!" chorled Ben.



8. So the lads hurried off and made for the cinema, where they saw a long queue waiting to go inside. And Ben hit on a cute little notion.



9. Yes, while Len supplied the movie his big brother did a clever upside down tap dance to the enjoyment of the crowd, who parted up.



4. For that log gave me such a nasty jolt that the dropper came unhooked, and just as Lena was about to grab my hair, the axe-head landed on her napper.



5. "Ow! What hit me?" gasped Lena, going wobbly at the knees. "My poor head—oh!" But in taking off her tin-lid, she biffed our commandant.



6. "Ha, ha! It's been quite a chapter of accidents for Lena this trip." I giggled as our commandant chased her with the handle. —MARTHA. 18-11-44



SNOKE SIGNALS.

THE cold grey dawn broke through the heavy storm clouds while the driving rain came like an icy sheet across Shadow Valley.

The rain had drenched down the torrential fury since the previous day. For above the slashing rain Rover Joe and his gallant old grey, Sleepy, had sheltered under a dense log at the edge of a forest preserve.

Now the tough little range wanderer had poked his fire into new life and had holed himself a room of coffee. "Gee, Sleepy, ole-timer," he drawled, addressing his battle-scarred grey retched near the little brown tree. "It shure looks like we'll have to hit the trail! Guess we can't wait any longer for this shower to pack up, Gotta."

The little Westerner suddenly broke off and a puzzled frown creased his visaged face. For above the slashing hiss of the rain had come the unmistakable sound of distant gun-shots.

Joe stepped out into the downpour and stood peering toward the misty trail that wound along through the dense forest. But as the echo of the shot died away, no other sound disturbed the steady swish of the drenching rain. So humming softly to himself, the little runner returned to his tent to continue his breakfast.

It was some time later that he heard Sleepy give a shrill whinny. In a flash he knew that his wise old log-legged pard was warning him of something.

Joe stepped once more outside his low tent, and there, some way down the water-logged trail, two men appeared from the thick belt of trees.

At sight of them the stocky wanderer, usually cheery-countenance clouded. They were carrying guns, and one of them had a bunch of furs slung over his shoulder.

Joe was instantly suspicious. He knew that the forest was a Government-owned preserve and was heavily trapped. Yet it was obvious that these men had been trapping in the forest. Was that the reason, he wondered, for the mysterious shots he had heard?

But before he could take action something else happened that caused his frown to deepen.

Away in the damp and misty distances his keen eyes caught a glimpse of a flock of greybirds drifting above the trees. Now the smoke broke, then reappeared.

"Shucks!" Joe muttered grimly, as he realized the reason for this. "Smoke signals!"

Helpless of the driving rain and the approach of the two men, he stood intently staring into the grey muck. His lips were moving, but no sound issued from his throat. He was silently reading the message that was floating up into the air.

"So that's it," Joe drawled at last, a fighting glint flashing into his eyes. "A forest ranger badly wounded in a gun-fight with trappers. Warns urgent!"

HARD LUCK!



"This dog you have much trouble with this engine?"
"Can't say as we do, somp!"
"The engine's broke, an' spring in mine broke the first day it was!"

help. Gee! I'd better answer the call, 'cause there's nobody else around."

Then his gaze dropped to the trail once more. The two trappers were almost upon him, and his keen intuition told him at a glance that they were dangerous men.

Stepping quickly into the shelter of the tree, Joe waited until the two trappers reached his tiny campment. Then the little wanderer stepped out of hiding.

"Hey, stranger," called one of the men gruffly at sight of Joe, "what about haddin' out a drop o' warm booze to a fellow who's been here?"

"Yeah, shure!" greeted the other man, who had a livid scar down his face. "But first you got to be a little bound up. We can do with a drink to help us on our way."

But Joe's visaged face remained grimly stern for a moment, then a slow smile crossed his lips.

"Say, homies, is that a request or a demand?" he drawled, and there was a note of defiance in his tones that seemed to annoy the two men.

"Guess that's an order, tramp!" roared the first, waving his red hair. "An' I reckon we ain't arguin' about it! Get me!"

But he gave the trapper whipped out a gun. But like a flash of greased lightning Joe leapt forward, and even as the fellow's finger squeezed the trigger, the little wanderer was down. The gun barked and the bullet narrowly missed Joe's legs as it flashed past.

Angered by the men's domineering tones and by that treacherous show of gun-play, the little range runner rushed at the man as he backed away. He wrenched the gun out of his hand and flung it far into the trees. "Next time," he roared, "I'll be back, and before redhead could put up a hand to defend himself he was whipped up into the air like a ball of smoke and was flying yards. He crashed to the rain-soddened trail, where his sliding body flung up a cloud of muddy water.

"Redhead! That should quench yo're thirst, redhead!" Joe chuckled.

Then, with a satisfied smile on his rain-streaked face, he swung round to tackle the ear-fashed trapper who had turned to face the little man's challenge. An instant later there was a flash, a report, and something whistled past Joe's head. The trapper had fired at point-blank range, but by a miracle the shot missed him.

Ere the man could fire a second time Joe was on him, grim-lipped and icy cool in his determination to teach him a lesson. The fellow had asked for it and he got it!

Joe didn't need to fight with bullets. Half a dozen well-timed blows from his weather-toughened fists sent the bigger man reeling backwards, to crash and lie on the muddy ground.

"And that's that!" yanted Joe. But the trouble wasn't over yet.

The fight had lasted only a few seconds, yet it gave Joe time to regain his breath. Snarling like a wild animal in his fury, he flung himself at Joe's back, and one arm hooked over his shoulder, the stocky wanderer was caught unprepared for this treacherous assault from behind. He was off his feet, and he struggled with all his whiplashed strength, he failed to break the stranglehold on his throat.

Slowly his visaged face tensed. His head began to swim. He felt his senses reeling.

To his mind flashed thoughts of the injured ranger whose signals he had read. He must help him—he mustn't let these gun-slinging trappers stop him.

He redoubled his efforts, but to no avail. His knees sagged; he began to sink to the muddy ground.

Suddenly he felt that sticky grip on his throat relax. The bulky figure of his red-headed opponent seemed to be whipped into the air away from him.

With a new burst of energy, Joe scrambled to his feet. Then a cry of death burst from his lips.

Sleepy had come to his rescue. The old grey was standing before him with his head bowed, and the figure of the red-headed trapper gripped in his

teeth—and he was shaking him like a terror-shakes a rat!

"Whoops! What a pard!" Joe cried, lunging forward to grip his now half-senseless assailant. "Drop in, Sleepy, y'old ruin! I'll see to him now!"

The trapper was too scared to offer further resistance, and it was not long before he and his dazed and battered pal were securely roped up and bound one on either side of a mighty fire-tree.

"Guess yo'll be safe 'til I can call for yo' later," Joe chuckled. Then he quickly saddled Sleepy. "Come on, ole-timer," he went on. "Reckon we gotta hurry. A guy in trouble wants our help!"

He bounded into the saddle, and, with a cheery wave of his hand to the two protesting trappers, who had been tied facing the full fury of the driving rain, he urged Sleepy down the trail.

A Swim for Life!

AFTER the hours of ceaseless rain the trail took on a red hot condition, and Sleepy splashed along through slushy mud often up to his fellocks. But the grey realised that his little master's mission was fraught with urgency and he pressed on like the gallant old horse he was.

Soon they came to a spot where the trail was about as level as a river rushing in a mighty torrent through the valley. The drenching downpour had loosened the rocks and the trail

traps in the forest under an' when I kicked 'em they shot me up." His face hardened. "But I'll know the coyotes again—they shan't get away this time!"

"Don't worry, ole-timer," Joe broke in, with a smile. "Reckon I rounded up two gun-slingers. And he got a range of hills, so I can't see the two men he had left securely bound."

"Gee, that's 'em!" cried the ranger eagerly. "I'll bet you've got 'em, Brant! Reckon I'll never be able to thank yo' enough for this day's work, pard."

"Shucks! Don't try!" Joe chuckled. Then his lips thinned resolutely. "Come on, pard, we gotta be on our way to Shadow Creek. Yo's gotta see a doctor pronto!"

The ranger could not walk, so Joe lifted him in the dim of the rain. He strode out into the driving rain. Hardly had he reached the trail where Sleepy was contentedly grazing than there came an ominous rumbling like thunder, some way ahead.

Joe's face suddenly clouded. He knew what that rumbling meant.

"Guess the trail's caved in on account of the rain!" he grunted.

But he was not to be so thoughtfully, then his grim smile returned. He grabbed Sleepy's rein.

"Reckon it's up to yo' old grey, ole-timer, to show the new grey gave a whinny as though saying, 'I'm ready for anything, Joe.'"

So the little wanderer decided to carry the wounded ranger back to Shadow Creek by way of the river. It was a reckless decision. The men's lives were in danger and Joe knew that minutes were precious. He must take the shortest cut to the distant cow town—and that was by way of the rain-swollen river.

He strapped the badly wounded man securely to Sleepy's back, and then the old grey down a slippery path to the river that swirled and rushed past in a foaming fury.

"Come on, now, ole-timer!" Joe coaxled, stroking the grey's sleek neck encouragingly. "Guess we gotta face it together. I know yo' won't let me down. In yo' go!"

The tough little Westerner allowed his horse to lead the way. He had water, then he leapt in after him, retaining a steady grip on the rein.

Next moment they were caught up in the foaming flood, and Joe, with his human burden and his master hanging on grimly to his head, were sent hurtling along on the swift current.

"Swim, Sleepy!" urged Joe. "I'm with yo', boy!"

It was one of the most terrifying experiences that had ever faced Sleepy and Joe, and it seemed impossible that the drenched horse and his human burden could survive the turbulent torrent. But as he plunged on, fighting to keep his head above water, the pinky grey gained confidence and soon was swimming strongly, with Joe helping him all he could.

At last, after a nightmare journey that seemed to last for hours, the old grey bent in the river Joe sighted the rain-drenched town of Shadow Creek, and his lips thinned up to a grimace of satisfaction.

Straining Sleepy towards the bank, he scrambled out, and then hauled the tired old grey up the slippery grass to the trail. And a few minutes later willing hands helped him to lift the wounded and unconscious of the man from the river, the dripping horse and carry him into the house of the doctor.

"That's yo' best pard any guy had," said Joe, rubbing Sleepy's nose affectionately. "Now we gotta find the sheriff and get him to take charge of redhead and his gun-slinging pard. Then I guess we'll find ourselves a nice dry roost. Sleepy, yo're an old ruin, but you're a ranger's fire a'nd a horse!"

The gallant old grey rubbed his nose against Joe's face and whinnied happily.

Joe's thrills and adventure with Joe and Sleepy in Friday week's number.

18-11-44

Readers who have difficulty in obtaining regular copies of COMIC CUTS are advised to place an order with their newsagents immediately.

Our Cheery Chuckle-raiser!

FOGGED!

Far from Home!

THREE fellows were sitting round a fire in a cheerful sitting-room. One of them, smoking a pipe, was Len Lakanen, the host. The other two, puffing at cigarettes, were Jerry Tomlin and Chris Cronkitt.

Both were working on the same office, and Tomlin and Cronkitt had been there for many years. Lakanen was a newcomer, but he had quickly made friends with the other two.

A very pleasant evening all three had had. But all good things come to an end, and this little gathering concluded very abruptly. Chris Cronkitt happened to glance at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"My giddy aunt!" he gasped, leaping to his feet. "Look at the time. I'd no notion we were so late. I shall have to buzz off at once, or I shall miss my last train home."

"You certainly don't want to do that, old man," said Jerry Tomlin. "It would be like going to a pretty long walk."

"Over ten miles," Chris replied. "And I don't fancy that at this time of night."

"Well, scurry along, and catch your train," said Len Lakanen. "And, should the worst happen and you miss it, come back and I'll put you up for the night. In fact, you may stay till breakfast with pleasure, instead of going all that way home."

"Thank you ever so much," chuckled Chris. "But if it's all the same to you, I'd rather get along home."

"And I'll be getting along, too," said Jerry Tomlin. "I haven't very far to go, but it'll be late enough by the time I get home."

So Lakanen conducted his two friends to the front door, where they donned their hats and coats. On going outside, the trio saw quite a thick mist had sprung up.

"Corks! It won't be very pleasant going through this," said Chris. "I'll just make the most of it, and be all the better; I haven't a time to spare. Cheerio, both of you!"

With that Chris Cronkitt went off, and was quickly swallowed up in the foggy gloom. Jerry Tomlin, who lived within walking distance, went in the opposite direction, so Chris had no company but his own.

"I hope that train is a few minutes late, or I stand a chance of missing it," he muttered. "What a datted nuisance this fog is! It doesn't give me a chance to run, or I shall be bumping 'Gook'."

Even as he spoke he cannoned into a sand-bike which he had not been able to see. He pulled his hat off his head, and he had to grope for it.

Slamming it back in place, Chris continued on his way, keeping as he best he could, as the circumstances would permit. Luckily he did not bump into any more obstacles, and eventually he reached the railway station.

His train was due in at eleven thirty-five. He saw by the clock on the booking-office wall that it wanted one minute to that time.

"Done, it—thank goodness!" he puffed. "And now it can get home as soon as it likes. I want to get home and into bed."

He passed through the ticket barrier on to the platform, where he was being swirled, and obviously getting tattered at every moment. The air was too close and chilly for him to stand near one of the seats, so Chris paced up and down and patted the time away.

"Hang it!" he booted at the end of his hour. "What's happened to that wretched train?"

It was a quarter of an hour after that he found out. A porter came along and informed Chris.

"No more trains to-night, sir," he said. "The eleven twenty-five has been cancelled owing to a very thick fog down the line."

"But—how?" howled Chris. "Cancelled? But—how am I to get home?"

That, of course, was a matter which



"What's the little game?" the man in blue wanted to know.

did not interest the porter. All he was concerned with now was to usher the disappointed travellers of the platform, and lock up for the night.

"Well, here's a pretty kettle-of-fish!" growled Chris. "Here am I stranded all these miles from home, and it's well after midnight. I wish now that I'd accepted Lakanen's offer to stay for the night. He invited me to go back if I missed the train. I think that's the best thing that I could do."

So Chris proceeded to retrace his steps to the house of Len Lakanen. It was his first visit to this neighbourhood, so it was quite strange to him. When he had come down with the other two the weather had been clear, and Lakanen, of course, had shown the way to his house.

But now there was no Lakanen to act as a guide, in fact there was nobody at all. And by this time the fog was very thick indeed.

"What a hell like getting lost!" gasped Chris after a time. "I don't quite know where I am exactly, or if I'm taking the right road."

However, he continued on, relying on his memory as to which streets to turn down. After a while he almost bumped into a pillar-box at the end of Lakanen's road, and this'll be it. All I have to do now is to grope my way along to Number 37.

Slowly he cautiously he proceeded along the street till he judged that he had almost reached the house he was seeking. He struck a match, and by its flickering light saw a number on a gate. It was "35."

"He's far out!" muttered Chris. "Lakanen's place will be next door but one."

So he passed on to the second house, quietly opened the gate and groped his way to the front door. There he frowned reflectively.

"It's over an hour since I left Lakanen," he muttered, "so no doubt by this time he'll be in bed and fast asleep. I hate the idea of waking him."

That was very considerate of Chris, but he had himself to consider, too. What he needed was a cosy bedroom, or, at least, shelter of some sort till the morning.

"He'll go far out," he thought, "if he went on. I'll go round the side way and see if I can let myself in through the window. I want to get into the house and make myself comfy in a chair for the night, and that would save disturbing Lakanen. He'll have to get up when he sees me in the morning, but that won't matter, and there'll be no harm done."

He quietly made his way round to the side of the house, which was a semi-detached one. At the end of the narrow path which there was on the garden he found a window, the catch of which was not fastened.

"That'll do," he gurgled. "And I shall be in, too, in a jiffy—inside out of this datted fog!"

He pushed open the window, still anxious not to rouse his friend sleeping up above. Then he started to clamber in, but was suddenly jerked to a halt when a shock that froze him to the marrow.

The light of a torch was flashed on his face, and a large, strong hand closed firmly round his right arm. Behind him and the torch beamed to a big, beefy policeman who had loomed up out of the darkness.

"What's the little game?" the man in blue wanted to know.

Chris tried to scream, but his tongue clogged to the roof of his mouth. He gulped and spluttered, and felt as though swarms of diminutive doodle bugs were flitting up and down his spine.

"I—er—that is to say—you see, it's lightning!" he stammered, when at last he could speak at all.

But there he stopped. Though he had a perfectly good story to tell to account for his actions, the night was for bidding, outside policeman seemed to reduce Chris to a state similar to a larkspur plant.

"It's like what?" the bobby snorted. "That's just what I want to know!"

For some seconds Chris's brain seemed to whirl like a jet-propelled circular saw. Then he came to earth with a bump.

"Well, the fact is, constable, I—er—I live here," he gulped. "This is my house. I—I don't happen to have my keys on me, so I thought I'd go off quietly this way to avoid disturbing anybody. I must admit that seeing you there was quite a shock. And now, if you've quite finished with my ankle, I should be obliged if you would let go of it, as you're giving me pins and needles."

The policeman seemed rather dubious about accepting the story at first. But presently, for the great relief of Chris, he gave a grunt and released his hold.

"All right," he said. "I saw you mooning about, and as you were so quiet and suspicious to my movements I thought I'd better keep an eye on you to see what you were up to. In you go, and don't come back without your keys."

"Gug-good night, sergeant!" gulped the immensely relieved Chris. "And thank you very much!"

He quickened his step into the room and

closed the window. There he stood with fast-beating heart listening to the soft tread of his boots on the carpet. "Thank goodness he believes that yarn of mine!" breathed Chris. "Now I'll grope my way through to the sitting-room and make myself comfortable before what remains of that fire."

Chris crept forward and saw that the sitting-room door was ajar. Peering into the room, he saw something else. The light of a small torch was flitting about and a hand was whisking up various objects and removing them from sight.

"My hat! It's a burglar!" muttered Chris. "Broken into Lakanen's house and robbing him! I'm jolly well going to stop this!"

Chris was on his way with a bound and beat him on the floor with a stout stick. "You've been here for some moments there was a fierce struggle. But Chris got the best of it, and he finished by sitting on the prostrate form of the burglar."

He drew a long breath and looked around. "Someone came bursting into the room, took my hat, and started, and Chris expected it to be his friend Lakanen. But it wasn't. It was a stout, elderly man, a total stranger."

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Roger and Jim of the THREE MUSTARDEERS help to solve

THE MURDER OF "SCOOBY" MYSTERY

TO-MORROW would be the last day of term at Merisham Town. Roger and Jim were at the village station waiting to meet Mary, who was coming to spend the night in order to be in good time for to-morrow's events. Suddenly Jim exclaimed loudly, "That's old Merrin's voice—sounds fiery, too." Again the voice shrieked: "I must be off!" and the boys looked towards the waiting-room. In a few moments they saw Mr. Merrin, the science master, emerge from the waiting-room.

"Hello, boys. These telephones I'm glad to see are long enough to grow legs and walk away. Presently another figure came out of the waiting-room—the school porter.

"That's the school porter," said Roger, carrying the torch, led the way. They traversed a cold, damp tunnel for about twenty yards until they came to a stone door. And from below the door shone a chink of light!

"It's a chink of light from a mighty push. It swung open, and they stumbled into what looked like a dungeon. But no dungeon over there, no dungeons, no dungeons, no dungeons, and no machinery, and all the apparatus of a science master's laboratory. The boys were gaping, another door opened, and in walked—the science master, and behind him, the school porter, and a third figure. And a gun! "Come on through this door," the boys heard the science master say, "get in, get in!" But the science master spoke. "Don't go, my boys. He means you, have you seen him? He was quickly, the porter spun round and looked at the science master's opportunity. "Come on, fellows," he yelled. They flung themselves at the porter, who soon was helpless beneath their combined weight. "What's happened?" the science master queried, he explained: "I'm a German detective, with relatives in Germany. This is in the pay of the Nazis, who were my friends. I'm a German detective, with relatives in Germany. This is in the pay of the Nazis, who were my friends. I'm a German detective, with relatives in Germany. This is in the pay of the Nazis, who were my friends."

"My fate was certain. So was that of my relatives. But you have saved me." And he bowed down before them. "My name is still retain my honour. Thank you, my boys."

Said Jim, relating the episode to Mary next day: "A thrilling discovery, as the boy who found that Mustard did make for enjoyable."

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"It's a chink of light from a mighty push. It swung open, and they stumbled into what looked like a dungeon. But no dungeon over there, no dungeons, no dungeons, no dungeons, and no machinery, and all the apparatus of a science master's laboratory. The boys were gaping, another door opened, and in walked—the science master, and behind him, the school porter, and a third figure. And a gun! "Come on through this door," the boys heard the science master say, "get in, get in!" But the science master spoke. "Don't go, my boys. He means you, have you seen him? He was quickly, the porter spun round and looked at the science master's opportunity. "Come on, fellows," he yelled. They flung themselves at the porter, who soon was helpless beneath their combined weight. "What's happened?" the science master queried, he explained: "I'm a German detective, with relatives in Germany. This is in the pay of the Nazis, who were my friends. I'm a German detective, with relatives in Germany. This is in the pay of the Nazis, who were my friends."

"My fate was certain. So was that of my relatives. But you have saved me." And he bowed down before them. "My name is still retain my honour. Thank you, my boys."

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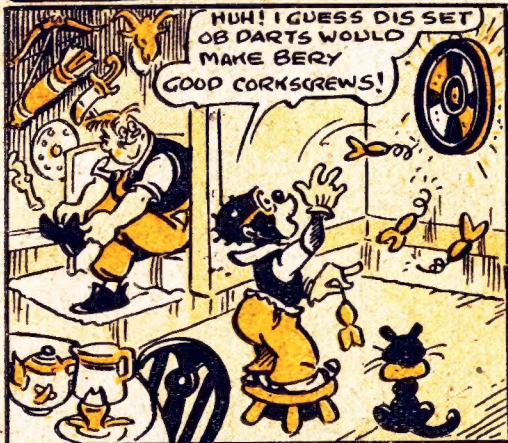
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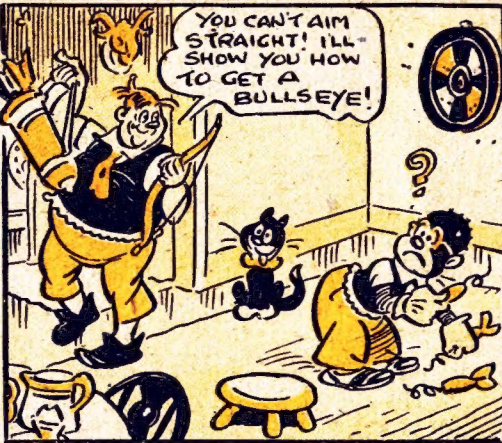
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PINHEAD and PETE

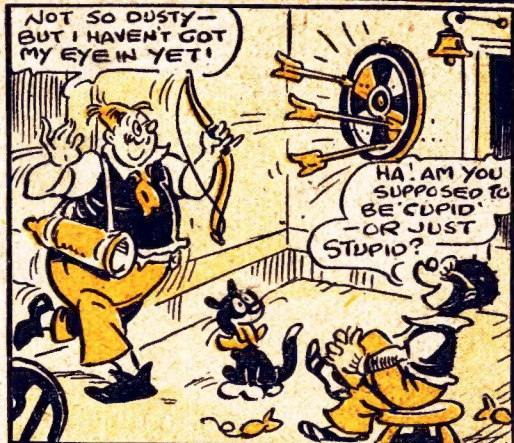
THE COON SCORES OFF HIS PAL AGAIN!



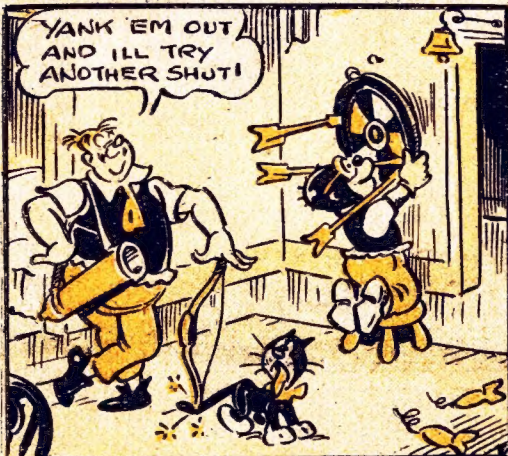
1. Pete was not a bit pleased when Pinhead told him that he would have to amuse himself for an hour or three, as he was going out. So to help pass the time pleasantly, he even let the coon use his darts.



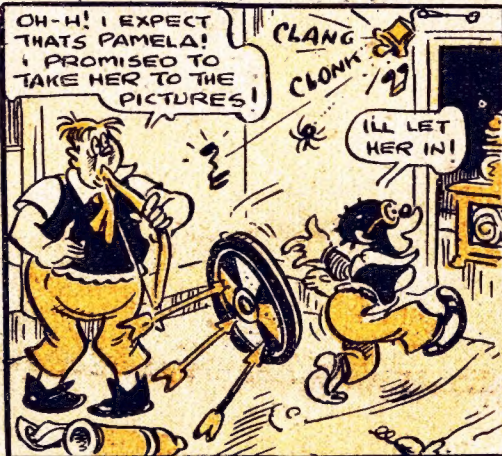
2. But Pete was so annoyed that he soon put the finishing touches to those. Then Pinhead produced his prize bow-and-arrows, hoping to keep the coon quiet. "I'll show you how to play!" he cried.



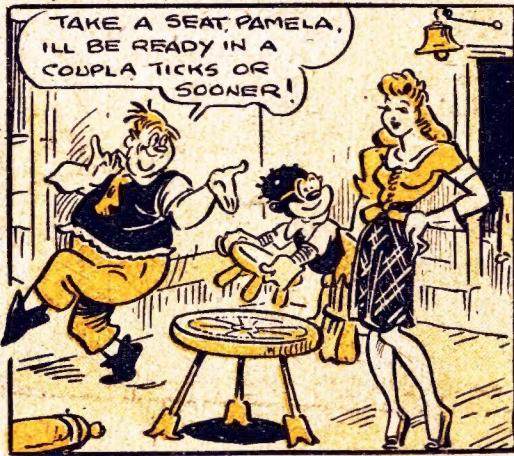
3. However, instead of plonking those arrows in the bullseye, the big boy only just managed to get them on the board. "I guess you're no Cupid if you cannot score better than dat!" said the coon.



4. "Oh, ho! Is that so?" cried the persevering Pinhead. "Well, just you yank those arrows out again and I'll show you how to score bullseyes!" To make a job of it, Pete had to take the board down.



5. Next tickle there came a tinkle on the front door-bell. So tossing the whole outfit aside, the coon rushed off to find out who the caller was. "It's only Pamela, so don't get excited!" cried Pinhead.



6. Of course, it was Pamela, for the big boy had a date with her and had promised to take her to the pictures. Seeing what she thought was a handsome new stool, Pamela promptly flopped down on it and—



7. Then discovered that Pinhead had let her in for a proper come-down. "Ow! Help!" she squealed as the seat collapsed beneath her. Pete rushed to the rescue and got in the way of her bag.



8. However, the gallant coon did not mean to let trifles like that stop him, and in next to no time he had the fair charmer on her feet again. "I—I'm sorry! It's all a mistake!" Pinhead was saying—



9. When—Clonk! The springy arrows caused the dartboard to score a knockout blow on Pinhead's chin. "I guess dis am where I score!" chuckled the coon. He guessed right and had a grand evening out.

